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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 21, 2016

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Baker-Polito Administration Launches Expanded STEM Internship Program for High School Students at Companies around the State

STEM internships will address skills gap, develop future workforce to fuel Commonwealth's rapidly growing innovation economy

BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration today launched an expanded initiative to connect high school students to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) internships across the Commonwealth. The announcement came during a MA STEM@Work event at Vertex headquarters in Boston, a company that's developed a model high school internship program.

One of the greatest challenges facing Massachusetts' rapidly growing innovation economy is the gap between available jobs in STEM fields and qualified workers to perform them.

"Massachusetts is home to one of the fastest growing innovation economies in the nation, and we need to do more to ensure we have a strong pipeline of skilled workers to fill critical job openings," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "That's why we are making a simple but powerful request of Massachusetts business leaders – consider hiring a high school student for a STEM internship."

The Massachusetts STEM Advisory Council, which is co-chaired by U.S. Representative Joseph P. Kennedy III, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito, and Jeffrey Leiden, M.D., Ph.D. Chairman, President and CEO of Vertex, recently identified four

priority areas to advance STEM education in the Commonwealth. They include developing more early college career pathways, broadening access to high quality computer science and engineering education, strengthening regional STEM networks and expanding work-based learning opportunities in STEM fields. This can be achieved by building a stronger network of employers offering career exploration and career immersion experiences to high school students, including job shadowing and paid internships.

“After traveling across the Commonwealth and meeting with companies leading the way in science, engineering, technology and math, it’s clear that a key challenge facing many businesses is finding enough qualified workers,” **said Lieutenant Governor Polito.** “STEM internships not only provide valuable career preparation for high school students, they enable companies to engage and develop future employees.”

The Council is working with Massachusetts’ School to Career Connecting Activities system to identify and develop STEM internship opportunities. The goal is to place more high school students in STEM internships by Spring and Summer 2017.

“Today’s students are tomorrow’s workforce and the key to a strong economy in Massachusetts. Our businesses have an important role to play in making sure our workers are the most talented anywhere in the world,” **said Representative Kennedy.** “This pioneering initiative will create an amazing opportunity for our students, our companies and our communities.”

More than 10,000 students worked with Commonwealth businesses last year, learning new skills and achieving greater career awareness and preparation. Several hundred of these placements were STEM-related, and the Council is looking to increase internship opportunities in these fields.

“As Boston’s innovation economy continues to grow and thrive, it’s important that our high school students gain exposure to the wide variety of STEM careers,” **said Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh.** “I thank all of Boston businesses who have joined our local efforts through the Mayor’s Summer Jobs Program over the years, and look forward to building on this successful model as we increase youth summer jobs within STEM related fields.”

During the next decade, the *President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology* estimates that U.S. industries will need one million more STEM graduates than the system is expected to produce. Despite the need, the U.S. Department of Education estimates that just 1 in 6 high school seniors are proficient in math and

interested in pursuing STEM higher education or careers.

Given this challenge, Massachusetts is working to connect high school students to internships at companies of all sizes across the state. The Connecting Activities system, which features dedicated staff who work with companies and high schools, provides assistance and support to businesses throughout the internship process. Since 2014, more than 250 STEM businesses from every region have hosted close to 1,000 high school interns a year. Participating companies include Vertex, which has established a model high school internship program in close partnership with the Private Industry Council and Boston Public Schools and hosted 30 high school interns this year.

"As leaders in the Commonwealth's innovation economy, we have a responsibility and a tremendous opportunity to train the next generation of leaders in STEM," **said Dr. Leiden**. "Vertex is proud to give local students the hands-on learning and professional development experiences that prepare them to succeed in college and career and unlock economic opportunity for the future."

GE, which recently moved its company headquarters to Boston and joined leaders at the MA STEM@Work event, also announced it will host high school interns for the first time starting next spring. "Developing the talent pipeline for the future lies at the heart of our business strategy. To help us stay ahead of the curve, as company and as a country, we must continue to invest in educating our youth and particularly opening their eyes to future careers in STEM," **said Ann R. Klee, vice president of Boston Development and Operations for GE and president of the GE Foundation**.

To learn more or to participate, please contact Blair Brown, staff director at the STEM Advisory Council, at Blair.Brown@state.ma.us

About the STEM Advisory Council

The vision of the STEM Advisory Council is to ensure all students in the Commonwealth receive comprehensive STEM education from highly-qualified educators so they are better informed and prepared to pursue post-secondary degrees or careers in these areas. Members of the Council include individuals from academia, business, government and non-profits who are well positioned to provide elevated awareness to the benefits of a STEM literate and skilled citizenry ready to fill the ranks of the 21st Century workforce. Building on earlier initiatives, the Governor's Advisory Council on STEM is now authorized by [Section 218 of Chapter 6](#) of Massachusetts General Law. For more information, please visit <http://www.mass.edu/stem/home.asp>.

About Connecting Activities

The Connecting Activities (CA) initiative has been a significant state mechanism for student career preparation and immersion since 1998. Funded annually in the state budget, Connecting Activities is funded by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in partnership with the state's workforce system. Connecting Activities is the state's leading mechanism, outside of its career vocational technical education programs, for providing students with work-based learning experiences. Connecting Activities currently brokers and supports work experiences for an average of over 10,000 students per year, partners with about half of the state's high schools to offer a wide range of career activities, and brings over 3,500 employers to the table annually for student career preparation.

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